

Home & School

CONNECTION®

Working Together for School Success

September 2012

Roanoke Rapids Graded City Schools
 Marcus Carcy, Parent Involvement Coordinator



SHORT NOTES

"Let's look it up!"

Show your youngster that research is part of everyday life. He might help you find a car's gas mileage or the best time to plant flower bulbs, for example. Point out different sources to search, such as websites, reference books, or the car's manual. He'll get used to looking things up, which will help when he does school projects.

DID YOU KNOW?

Participating in your child's schooling is one of the most important ways you can help her be successful. Try to attend events (back-to-school night, math fair) where you can learn about ways to support her at home. You will build stronger relationships with teachers, and your youngster will see that school is a priority.

Gear up for "specials"

Encourage your child to be ready for specials (library, music, art, PE) at school each week. She could put her schedule on the family calendar. Then, talk about books she might check out during library time, ask what she would like to make in art, and help her remember to wear sneakers for PE.

Worth quoting

"Each day comes bearing its own gifts. Untie the ribbons."

Ruth Ann Schabacker

JUST FOR FUN

Carla: How do you keep someone in suspense?

Andy: I don't know. How?

Carla: I'll tell you tomorrow!



Excited about school

A new teacher, new classmates, new books... each school year is full of changes for your youngster. Try these suggestions to boost his enthusiasm and encourage learning at home all year long.

Enjoy privileges

What will your child be allowed to do this year that he wasn't old enough for last year? Maybe he gets to eat lunch in the cafeteria or use bigger playground equipment. Or perhaps he can join the band or be a reading buddy for a younger student. Talk about his "big kid" privileges to help him look forward to new experiences.

Explore topics

Give your youngster regular opportunities to learn more about subjects he's studying in school. You might have him practice what he has learned about recycling by sorting paper, plastic, and aluminum at home. Or if he studies U.S.



presidents, start a dinner conversation about the candidates in this year's election.

Share knowledge

Your child would probably love to be the family "expert" on a topic. Let him teach everyone about something he is working on. A younger child could pretend to be a teacher and give your family an alphabet lesson or explain addition. An older one might demonstrate the earth's rotation or explain different kinds of poetry.♥

Meet and greet

Ryan greets his bus driver with "Good morning!" Josephine waves to the secretary as she passes the office. Here are ways your child can get to know the adults around her, too, and feel more comfortable at school:

- Who works in your youngster's school? Help her think of different staff members (custodian, cafeteria workers, counselor). See how many names she can learn before the first month of school is over—the building will be full of familiar people!

- Let your child see you speaking to staff members. Drop off her medication together at the health room, and introduce her to the nurse. Or take her to the book fair, and say "Hi" to the media specialist.♥



A caring family

A supportive family can give your youngster confidence and teach her to care about others. Suggest that family members try these ideas to show one another that they care.

Highlight good news. Let your child write "Family News" on a strip of paper and tack it to a bulletin board. When something good happens (her big sister runs a 5K, you get a new job), have her post it on the board. Encourage everyone to add a comment to each news item. ("Way to go, Mom!")

Build each other up. When a family member is disappointed or frustrated, chances are someone in your house



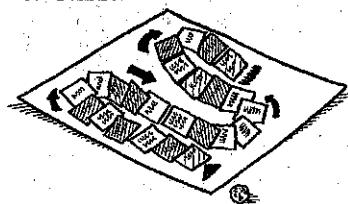
has had a similar experience. Ask that person to talk about her experience and how she handled it. For example, your youngster might tell her little brother, "I remember when my best friend changed schools. I was so sad. But we still spent time together after school."

Laugh together. Humor can relieve stress and strengthen bonds. Many families have a collection of "inside" jokes and stories. Tell them frequently, and share a good laugh. ("Remember when we found the cats on the top shelf of the pantry?")♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Make a board game

This colorful board game is fun to make—and can help your youngster work on skills.



First, have him assign a color of construction paper to each subject (language arts, math, science, social studies). Then, your child can cut six squares from each color and glue them on a poster board into a game-board pattern. Suggest that he add a "start" and a "finish" line.

Next, help him think of a fun activity to write on each block. For math, he might put, "Make up a math problem about your favorite snack." A language arts block could say, "Write a silly sentence that has five words."

To play, take turns rolling a die. Using a game token, move the number of blocks shown, and do what's written on the one you land on. The first person to the finish line (on an exact roll) wins.♥

OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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Q & A

Be a good listener

Q: My son often doesn't seem to listen when people talk. How can I help him become a better listener?

A: A good listener has an easier time following instructions—an important skill at school and at home. Try simple games to boost your son's listening skills. You might hide a small object like a remote control and give him two- or three-step instructions to find it. For example, you could say, "Take three giant steps forward. Look behind the chair." Or during a walk, take turns giving each other instructions, such as "Turn around three times whenever you see a squirrel."

Also, encourage your son to be an active listener. After you say something to him, ask him to repeat it in his own words. When he's at school, suggest that he repeat the teacher's directions in his head ("We're supposed to do the odd-numbered problems").♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Talking about money

My kids were always asking to buy things such as dress-up shoes or new games. They didn't seem to understand that these items weren't in our budget.

I wanted them to learn about how we spend our money—and that it is limited. So I got a spiral notebook and labeled it "Family Spending Journal." I explained that for two weeks, everyone would keep track of what they spent money on. I listed items like my subway fare, the

electric bill, and the taxes taken out of my paycheck. The children wrote down expenses such as school lunch, soccer cleats, and field trip fees.

After a few days, they were surprised by how many things we needed money for. Our kids had no idea, for example, that we paid for taxes on our income, several types of insurance, and membership in our homeowners' association. Sometimes they still ask to buy too many things at the store, but when I say no, at least they understand why.♥



Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

September 2012

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Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ Listen to My Trumpet!

Piggie is excited to play her trumpet for Gerald the elephant. But the sounds she plays ("Bl-ah!" "Tr-ink!") aren't very musical. Gerald is a good friend, so he compliments Piggie on how loud and shiny her trumpet is. Mo Willems's story ends with a silly twist.



■ Whoever You Are

Children around the world might speak different languages and live in different kinds of houses, but they can have the same feelings. That's the message in this colorful book by Mem Fox. Pictures show little ones hugging their mothers, laughing with friends, and crying over scraped knees. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ Clouddette

The big clouds in the sky are good at making rain and thunder, but little Clouddette can't keep up. Then, she meets a friendly frog who needs just enough rain to make a pond. It's the perfect job for a tiny cloud! A cute story by Tom Lichtenheld.

■ Every Thing on It

Imagine a hot dog with "everything" on it: a parrot, a goldfish, and a front-porch swing, plus other toppings. This collection of more than 100 poems and drawings by Shel Silverstein also includes "Kid-Eating Land Shark" and "Twenty-eight Uses for Spaghetti."



Fun with picture books

When you read to your child, she probably likes to look closely at the illustrations. They show her what the characters look like, and they help her understand the plot. You can use her interest in the pictures to improve her reading skills. Here are activities to try.

"Read" the pictures

Encourage your youngster to look at the pictures and make up her own story. Pick a book she's not familiar with, and use a sheet of paper to cover up the words while she tells her tale, page by page. Then, read the book to her and ask her to compare the two stories ("Mine was about a jungle, too, but no one got lost").

Be an illustrator

Suggest that your child make pictures to go with a favorite book. She can pretend that she is the illustrator and she gets to decide what the characters and the setting look like. Have her consider different materials (paint, ink, chalk) and choose what works best with the story. She might use bright finger paints for a book about autumn leaves or soft



pencil drawings for a story about nighttime.

Invent a solution

Most stories have a problem and a solution. Read a book to your youngster, and ask her to identify the problem. Next, encourage her to come up with a solution. For instance, she could suggest ways two characters might compromise when they disagree. Or she might invent a device that would solve a problem. *Example:* After reading *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* (Judi Barrett), she could use building materials (craft sticks, cardboard tubes, tape, rubber bands) to design a giant sling-shot that would get rid of the food. ♥

I'm a reader

Put your youngster on the path to independent reading with this three-step strategy:

1. Read a book aloud. While you read, call his attention to the words by running your finger under them. Ask him to point to words that he recognizes.

2. Read the same story in unison. Your child can match his pace and tone to yours. *Note:* Remember that however you read is fine—your youngster is happy to read with you!

3. Listen to your child read. He might have memorized parts of the book or learned some of the words. Reading all by himself will boost his confidence as a reader. ♥



Tell me all about it!

"The tooth fairy came last night!" When your youngster shares an experience with you, take the opportunity to help him learn to tell stories—an important pre-writing skill. Consider these ideas.

• **Write it.** Offer to write down your child's news or to help him write. He might print words he knows (*the, came*) while you add the harder ones (*tooth, night*). As you write each word, say it slowly to help him make the connection between sounds and letters.



• **Build vocabulary.** You can introduce new words as you talk about or write down his announcement ("Soon, your *permanent* tooth will come in").

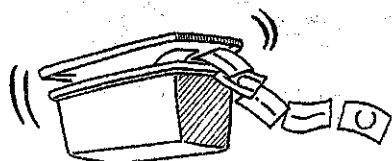
• **Get details.** Try asking questions, such as "What do you think the tooth fairy does with the teeth?" or "What does she wear?" Encourage your

youngster to add the answers to his story. This will help him use his imagination and create more vivid stories.

Idea: Post his tale on the refrigerator and ask family members to add comments ("Congratulations on losing your first tooth"). Help him read them at the end of the day.♥

Fun with Words Word machine

Letters go in, and words come out! Help your child use this word-making "machine" to build her spelling skills.



Secretly think of a word your youngster knows. (Her name is a fun word to start with.) Write each letter on a separate slip of paper, and put the slips into a small container with a lid. Then, ask her to shake the container, remove the lid, and spill out the letters. She can arrange and rearrange the letters to spell as many words as possible. For example, *Michelle* might spell *me, hi, and lime*. Tell her that one word will use all the letters—can she find it? (It's her name!)

Idea: Write down the words your child spells. After you've played several times, let her cut the words out and sort them (by first letter, number of letters, or vowel sound). For example, *me* and *hi* would go together because they each have two letters.♥

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Q&A Choosing library books

Q When we go to the library, my daughter is overwhelmed by all the choices. How can I help her pick books?

A Being able to choose books that she'll enjoy is a skill your child can use throughout her life.

As she browses the shelves, she might look for book covers that catch her eye. Help her read the front flap or the back cover to get an idea of whether the story interests her.

Also, when a teacher reads a book that your daughter likes, suggest that she try to remember the author's name. At the library, the two of you can look for other books by that writer. Finally, encourage your youngster to talk to classmates who enjoy the same kinds of books she does. If she and her best friend both like Barbara Park's *Junie B. Jones* series, they might recommend other books to one another.♥



Parent to Parent Write around the house

My son Max came home excited about a classroom activity called "writing around the room." The students carry clipboards and write down words posted on walls and bulletin boards. He showed me his list—it included words he recognized, like *morning*, and ones that he didn't, such as *schedule*.

Then, he asked if he could write around our house. I was happy that Max wanted to practice writing, so I gave him a clipboard, paper, and

a pencil. He copied *power* and *high* from the microwave, and *garage* and *race* from his toys. When he was finished, we read his list together.

Now, I purposely put up words for him to discover. I'll clip a recipe for his favorite foods and hang it on the refrigerator at his eye level, or I'll label a household item *desk* or *chair*. Max loves finding the words and adding them to his list. Every few days, he likes to count the words and tell me how many he has.♥

